

Message Text

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ERDA-A. FRIEDMAN

DEPT OF INTERIOR-B.BURNS

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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 2 LINE 6 OMITTED)

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: TECH, MX

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MEETING OF US-MEXICO WORKING GROUP ON
DESALTING STUDY

1. AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, DISCUSSIONS AND COOPERATIVE
STUDIES ON FEASIBILITY OF LARGE DUAL-PURPOSE NUCLEAR
POWERED DESALTING PLANTS NEAR GULF OF CALIFORNIA FOR
MEETING WATER AND POWER NEEDS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN US AND
NORTHWESTERN MEXICO HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY FOR SOME YEARS.
AFTER PUBLICATION OF PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY STUDY IN
1968 PROPOSED DETAILED FOLLOW-ON TECHNICAL STUDIES AND NEAR-
TERM EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS DID NOT RECEIVE MEXICAN SUPPORT
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ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF GOM DECISION TO DEFER ACTION UNTIL

COLORADO RIVER SALINITY PROBLEM RESOLVED.

2. TECHNICAL AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES HAVE RECENTLY SOUNDED OUT ON INFORMAL BASIS VIEWS OF MEXICAN TECHNICAL OFFICIALS ON DESIRABILITY OF CONTINUING WITH FURTHER STUDIES NOW THAT SALINITY DISPUTE SETTLED AND HAVE OBTAINED POSITIVE RESPONSE INCLUDING THAT OF CABRERA. INFORMAL CONVERSATION BETWEEN THESE OFFICIALS SUGGEST THAT LOGICAL NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO HOLD BILATERAL MEETING OF SMALL TECHNICAL TEAMS TO DISCUSS NATURE AND SCOPE OF FUTURE COOPERATION. TENTATIVE AGREEMENT REACHED TO HAVE REPRESENTATIVES

PREVIOUSLY PARTICIPATING IN DESALTING WORKING GROUP MEET AT US LOCATION FOR 2 OR 3 DAYS DURING WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29. US TEAM WOULD PROBABLY INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF ERDA, INTERIOR, FEA AND STATE.

3. WHILE DEPARTMENT VIEWS PROPOSED MEETING AS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY TO APPRAISE CURRENT MEXICAN ATTITUDES ON COOPERATION IN THIS DESALTING PROJECT, AND POSSIBLY TO RESUME JOINT STUDIES, WE ARE ALSO CONSCIOUS OF FACT THAT SUCH A MEETING MAY BE MISINTERPRETED AS USG DECISION TO PROCEED WITH LARGE-SCALE DESALTING PROJECT ALONG LINES RECOMMENDED IN 1968 FEASIBILITY STUDY. A NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE 1968 IN AREAS BEARING ON SUCH A DECISION, E.G., POLICY ATTITUDES AND CONSEQUENT BUDGETARY DECISIONS INVOLVING DESALTING STUDIES, DESALTING ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENERGY POSITION OF BOTH COUNTRIES.

4. (A) DOES THE EMBASSY PERCEIVE ANY OBJECTION TO HOLDING THE SPECIFIC MEETING DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH 2? IN THIS CONNECTION, IT SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE GOM THAT THIS IS NOT A PROPOSAL TO RESUME THE STUDIES OUTLINED IN THE 1972 AGREEMENT, BUT RATHER A MEETING TO CONSIDER THE SCOPE OF FUTURE COOPERATION IN THIS FIELD. IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT IN VIEW OF THE VIRTUAL ELIMINATION OF THE U.S.'S OWN DESALTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, U.S. WOULD FAVOR MORE LIMITED SCOPE FOR FUTURE COOPERATION. IF EMBASSY AGREES THAT SEPT. MEETING SHOULD BE HELD ON THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BASIS, IT SHOULD EXPLORE WITH MEXICAN AUTHORITIES, AND REPORT THEIR RESPONSE SOONEST.
(B) WHAT ARE EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON ATTEMPTING TO CONCLUDE AGREEMENT AND PROCEEDING WITH LARG
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